

Remarks:

This amendment is submitted in an earnest effort to advance this case to issue without delay. The examiner has indicated that the case contains allowable subject matter.

The specification has been amended to eliminate some minor obvious errors and to place it in better US form, principally by inserting the required PCT cross-reference paragraph and US-style headings. No new matter whatsoever has been added.

The subject matter of claim 8 has been identified with reference 7" in FIG. 2 and cited in the amendments to the Specification. Claim 14 has been dropped, mooted the objection to it. Elements 19 and 20 are shown in FIG. 2.

The terms "drive means" and "aspirating means" have been inserted into the Specification, it being noted that the terms "drive" and "aspirating" were already there so that the person skilled in the art would probably have been able to figure out what the "drive" and "aspirating" means were.

Thus the application is in condition for allowance and passage to issue.

If only minor problems that could be corrected by means of a telephone conference stand in the way of allowance of this case, the examiner is invited to call the undersigned to make the necessary corrections.

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Enclosure: Marked Specification
 Clean Specification
 Replacement Drawing (2 sheets)

CLEANING SYSTEM FOR AIRCRAFT SKIN

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

5 This application is the US national phase of PCT application PCT/AT2004/000137, filed 23 April 2004, published 04 November 2004 as WO2004/094078, and claiming the priority of Austrian patent application A619/03 itself filed 23 April 2003, whose entire disclosures are herewith incorporated by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

10 The invention relates to a system for cleaning the skin of aircraft of all types, in particular comprising a scrub head that is carried on a support, for example an arm of a truck-type fork lift.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

15 For technical reasons and to meet statutory requirements, passenger aircraft must be cleaned at regular intervals. At present passenger aircraft used for short hops are cleaned every 45 days and for long trips every 90 days.

20 A particular disadvantage of the standard cleaning method is that both the cleaning agent and liquid (dirty water) fall to the ground and have to be collected so that the mixture of liquid, cleaning agent, and dirt can be dealt with.

OBJECT OF THE INVENTION

25 It is therefore an object of the invention to provide a cleaning system that can wash, polish, and dry aircraft of any size and type without leaving cleaning agent, liquid, and the like on the ground. A further object of the invention is to provide a

cleaning system that reduces the operating costs standard to date and thus reduces the cleaning costs.

To reduce costs it would be desirable if the aircraft to be cleaned could be cleaned directly on the ramp or anywhere else, without having to move it into a hangar.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

These objects are attained in that the cleaning system has a scrub head that has at least one roller, outlets for at least one cleaning agent, inlets constituting part of an aspirating means for drawing in the cleaning agent, and outlets for steam, a polishing agent, or the like.

To best achieve the set goal, it is preferable when there are three rollers provided with bristles, blades, or the like and the rollers are carried on respective (hollow) shafts.

In order to supply the cleaning liquid necessary for scrubbing, it is preferable that the shaft carrying the cleaning roller is provided with the outlets through which the cleaning fluid is pumped.

To suction off the supplied cleaning liquid and dissolved dirt, it is preferable that the shaft carrying the aspirating roller is formed with transverse slots through which the cleaning fluid and dirt are suctioned; in this manner it is possible to suction off the cleaning liquid and dirt.

A particular advantage of the apparatus according to the invention is that the shaft carrying the polishing roller has outlets through which a polishing agent and/or steam are pumped.

To rotate the shaft(s), vanes are mounted and an air stream is directed against them to rotate the shaft(s).

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

In the following the invention is more closely described with reference to an embodiment shown in the drawing, without being limited to this embodiment. Therein:

FIG. 1 is a bottom view of the scrubbing head according to the invention; and

FIG. 2 is a longitudinal section (A-A) through the device in accordance with the invention.

SPECIFIC DESCRIPTION

According to FIG. 1 a scrubbing head 1 has three rollers 2, 7, and 13.

The scrubbing roller 2 is provided with bristles and is carried on a hollow shaft 3.

A cleaning liquid (mixture of water and cleaning agent) is fed in through an inlet 4 into the hollow shaft 3 and thus enters the scrubbing head 1. The cleaning fluid exits the hollow shaft 3 through the nozzles 5.

The rotating bristles of the scrubbing roller 2 spread the cleaning fluid exiting from the outlets 5 in the scrubbing head 1 on the aircraft surface; this cleaning fluid loosens the dirt on the aircraft surface.

The scrubbing roller 2 is mounted in a bearing 6.

Like the roller 2, there is an aspirating roller 7 mounted on a hollow shaft 8. This hollow shaft 8 is mounted in a bearing 7'.

The aspirating roller 7 is provided with axially extending plastic blades 7" (FIG. 2); these blades 7" move the particle solution on the outer skin of the aircraft being cleaned.

The hollow shaft 8 is formed with transverse slots 9.

5 The dirty water and the particles freed from the aircraft are sucked in through these slots 9; the dirty water and the particles move through the slots 9 into the hollow shaft 8 and are sucked in the direction of arrow P⁸ along the hollow shaft 8.

10 Steam and/or a polishing agent are fed in through an intake 10 into the scrubbing head 1. The steam or polishing agent exits through outlets 11 of a hollow shaft 12. This shaft 12 carries a polishing roller 13. The roller 13 is mounted on bearings 14.

15 The hollow shafts 3, 8, and 12 carry as is standard vanes (not illustrated) so that they can be rotated by a stream of air directed at these vanes.

20 Another embodiment is possible where an electric motor in a drive 15 rotates the hollow shafts 3, 8, and 12. A transmission is provided between the electric motor constituting a drive means and the hollow shafts 3, 8, and 12.

25 The hollow shafts 3, 8, and 12 are rotated at different speeds and run in opposite directions. The entire assembly of the scrubbing head 1 with the rollers 2, 7, and 13 on their shafts 3, 8, and 12 is surrounded by a housing 16, with the blades 7" projecting past the housing 16 as shown in FIG. 2 like the unillustrated bristles of the roller 2.

Outside the housing 16 there is a connector block 17 to which are made the connections with the cleaning-fluid input 4, the input 10 for polishing agent and steam, and an outlet 18 through which dirty water and particles are sucked.

FIG. 2 shows how the aspirating roller 7 is mounted inside the housing 16. The aspirating roller 7 is mounted on the hollow shaft 8 that has the transverse slots 9. The hollow shaft 8 is journaled in bearings 7'.

On the upper side of the scrubbing head 1 are fan/motor units 19 and 20 (see FIG. 2). An air passage 21 extends inside and around the housing 16. In order to increase the air-travel speed, the housing inner walls converge generally conically. In order to further increase the speed of the air current, the flow passage 21 is shaped like a nozzle 22 at its outlet. Air is sucked in as shown by P^{19} , $P^{19'}$, P^{20} , and $P^{20'}$, moves along the passage 21 and is expelled at the outlet 22. The annular exiting air stream seals the housing to the aircraft hull.

Further modifications are possible according to the invention, for example fewer or more rollers could take over the functions of cleaning and polishing. In addition the locations of the various inputs and outputs for the cleaning agents and dirty water could be moved. As already stated, the way the rollers are driven can be changed, by an electric or pneumatic motor and a transmission.